

The Folklore of the Hikayat Malim Deman

BY R. O. WINSTEDT, D. LITT., (OXON).

In the Malay folk romance *Malim Deman* (ed. R. O. Winstedt and A. J. Sturrock, Singapore 1908) the hero from whom the tale takes its name finds the ring and a tress of hair of the princess he is fated to wed in a golden bowl afloat on a stream. He fumigates them with incense whereupon their owner and her six sisters fly down from fairy-land. Malim Deman steals the magic flying raiment of the youngest princess and so wins her for his bride. Owing to neglect she flies home to fairy-land with her child. Malim Deman borrows a *borak*—the flying animal whereon the Prophet Mohamed ascended to heaven—from genies, pursues and regains his wife and brings her back to earth.

Now the episode of a prince falling in love with a princess from finding her hair floating downstream, besides occurring in an Egyptian romance three thousand years old (Clouston's "Popular Tales and Fictions," vol. I, p. 351), is common in Indian folklore:—No. 4 of Lal Bahari Day's "Folk-tales of Bengal," and the second story of the Tamil romance "Madana Kamaraja Kadai," translated by Pandit S. M. Natesa Sastri. In a Sinhalese folk-tale a king finding a hair in a fish's belly wishes to wed the owner (Parker's "Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon," vol. II, p. 168, Tale 111). Incidentally one may note that a hair in a bowl is one of the regalia of the Yamītuan of Negri Sembilan.

Magie flying raiment (*baju layang kain layang*) is part of the stock-in-trade of the world's folk-lore. Nymphs, apsaras or fairies bathing, and one of them having her clothes (Tawney's *Katha Sarit Sagara*, vol. II, p. 452 and 576; a Bengal story in "The Indian Antiquary," vol. IV, p. 54; Thornhill's "Indian Fairy Tales" p. 15) or flying garments (Swynnerton's *Indian Nights "Entertainments*, p. 343) stolen by a man who marries her is a very common plot in Indian folk-lore and literature. In the Persian romance of King Bahram Ghur and Husin Banu the hero obtains his fairy bride by filching her dove-dress (Clouston *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 182-191). There is a Santali version of the story and a Japanese (B. H. Chamberlain's "Classical Poetry of the Japanese"). Cf. also Parker *op. cit.*, vol. II, Tale 152, p. 359. But of course the classical story of the bride-maidens is the tale of Hasan of Bassorah in the "Arabian Nights" (Burton, vol. VIII, p. 7).

The world-wide circulation of the myth of the swan-maidens and its various forms and stages is discussed by Hartland on pages 255-332 of "The Science of Fairy Tales" (London 1891).